

ON THE PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT OF VEDĀNTA
AND ŚAIVA (TRIKA) PHILOSOPHIES IN KASHMIR

Man has always been in search of peace. In this pursuit he has sought answers to questions that have cropped up in his mind. Some of these questions are: (i) What is the nature of man? (ii) What is the nature of universe? (iii) What is the relation between the individual (*Jīvātmā*) and the universal (*Paramātmā*) self? In attempts to answer these questions, various postulations have been propounded which, in the course of centuries, developed into various philosophies and schools of thought in different places. In India, besides the six well-known systems of Hindu philosophy, namely, *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṃkhya*, *Yoga*, *Mīmāṃsā*, and *Vedānta*, there are many schools of thought which, in reality, are but variations of these systems. The foundation of all these shades and schools of Indian thought is the concept of the Ultimate Reality, variously termed Consciousness, *Brahman*, *Śiva*, *Allāh*, or *God*. All these schools of thought converge on several common inferences which may be spelled out as follows:

- (i) Existence of an eternal cycle of Nature, which is without a beginning and without an end, and which involves the phases of Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution.
- (ii) Life and death are but two phases of a single cycle to which soul is bound, and this binding of the soul arises from the ignorance of the true nature of things.
- (iii) *Dharma* is the moral law of the universe that accounts for these cycles of Nature; as well as the destiny of human soul.
- (iv) The knowledge of the Self is path to freedom and Yoga is the method to attain final liberation or salvation.

It follows from this that all schools of Indian thought are actually the fundamental interpretations of the Ultimate Reality. They are deeply

inter-related and their thought-content and methods are dependent on one another. There is no mutual contradiction in their approaches as they all lead to the same goal, namely, the knowledge or realization of the Ultimate Reality and the liberation of soul. « To get rid of evil and to attain permanent and supreme bliss » (*aniṣṭa-nivṛtti*, *paramānanda-prāpti*) is the innate desire of every creature in the world.

In the account that follows an attempt is made to present a comparative picture of two of the most important schools of Indian thought, namely, the Advaita-Vedānta of Śaṅkara and Śaivism (*Trika* philosophy) of Vasugupta and Somānanda. Both these schools have close affinities insofar as both advocate monism, and, as we shall see later, that in the course of their development towards maturity, Kashmir has provided the fertile ground for their mutual interaction and synthesis. While Advaita-Vedānta influenced Kashmir and its people profoundly, *Trika* Śaivism developed here into a mature system of philosophy. However, this inter-relation and synthesis did not in any manner affect their individual development to suit particular minds. The underlying reasons for this individuality in the development of these philosophies may be found in the historical background and geographical situation in which they arose and grew. While both are said to be of divine authorship, Vedānta was founded in the plains of India by the sober seer of the yore — Bādarāyaṇa, and the tenets of *Trika* Śaiva philosophy were expounded by the sentimental sage Durvāsa somewhere in the Himalayan ranges.

Vedānta is an enquiry into the nature of Ultimate Reality and Kashmir Śaivism discusses the nature of this Ultimate Reality and explains the cause of the initial impulse (*spanda*) in nature. The Vedas are the sources of Vedānta and Śaivism derives from the Tantras which present supplementary explanations to Vedic thought. There is no doubt that both are the revelations favoured to great sages and seers and neither objects to the postulates of either of the philosophies. The similarity in the scope of both philosophies is brought about clearly by Śrīmat Swāmī Lakshmanjoo¹, the living exponent of Kashmir Śaivism, when he says: « Like Vedānta, this system (Kashmir Śaivism) endeavours to remove the innate ignorance that separates the individual from the universal. But whereas Vedānta holds that the universe is unreal, *Trika* firmly believes that the creation is just like its creator, very real ».

Vedānta and Śaiva philosophies seem to have prevailed in Kashmir since very early times. *Kula* system of Śaivism, advocating the highest form of Śiva, had been introduced in Kashmir sometime in the fourth century A.D. and *Krama* system of Śaivism, connected with *Rāja-yoga* and *Kuṇḍalinī-yoga* which stress the interdependence of vital air and mind, had existed even earlier. During the reign of King Lalitāditya

1. SWAMĪ LAKSHMANJOO, *Kashmir Saivism* (a lecture), MS, 1966.

(725-761 A.D.), two renowned Śaiva families of Saṅgamāditya and Atrigupta migrated into Kashmir at the request of the King². They practised Tantric Śaiva rituals, the influence of which was apparently visible when Śaṅkara (788-820 A.D.) subsequently visited Kashmir in the early 9th century A.D. Śaṅkara's Tāntric philosophy in turn influenced *Trika*. Pandey³, while tracing the history of Kashmir Śaivism, says: « On the authority of the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* (chapter V, 66) we know that Bhaṭṭa Kallaṭa, the pupil of Vasugupta, was a contemporary of Avantivarman, King of Kashmir (855-883 A.D.). There he is referred to as « Siddha ». It is, therefore, evident that at that time he was an old man of established reputation. Vasugupta, the teacher of Kallaṭa, therefore, it is natural to suppose, belonged to the preceding scholastic generation extending from about 825 to 850 A.D. We shall, therefore, not be wrong if we say that Vasugupta gave a systematic form to the philosophical ideas of the monistic Tantras in his *Śiva-Sūtras* in the next decade after Śaṅkarācārya's visit to Kashmir towards the end of the second decade of the 9th century A.D. ».

In the wake of deterioration brought about by a split of Buddhism, Śaṅkara attempted to re-establish the true faith of *Upaniṣads*, previously called the Vedānta, by explaining them, as system, through the medium of his well-known commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras*. He gave a sound footing to Vedānta philosophy by writing commentaries on the ten *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. He composed a number of hymns to a variety of deities in the Hindu pantheon, such as Sarasvatī, Kṛṣṇa, Śaṅkara, Skanda, Gaṇeśa and so on, thereby giving a firm direction to the multifarious faiths prevalent in the country. He stressed that the worship of different deities leads to the same goal, the Ultimate Truth or realization. In his hymn to Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Śaṅkara's conception of the Ultimate Reality is the same as that of *Pratyabhijñā* of Somānanda and Utpalācārya. This is clear when we compare the following two stanzas from *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra* and *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vimarśinī* respectively:

*bījasyāntarivāṅkuro jagadidaṃ prāṇnirvikalpaṃ punaḥ
māyākālpitadeśakālakalanā vaicitryacitrīkṛtaṃ,
māyāviva vijṛmbhayatyapi mahāyogīva yas svecchayā
tasmai śrī gurumūrtaye nama idaṃ śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrtaye*⁴.

« He, in whom this universe, prior to its projection was potentially present like a tree in a seed, and by whom it was wrought to its multi-form by the magic, as it were. Of His own will or in the manner of a

2. JANKINATH KAUL, *Trika śāsan kā āvirbhāv* (in Hindi). Mālinī, Kashmir Shaiva Institute (Srinagar, 1970), pp. 11-6.

3. K. C. PANDEY, *Abhinavagupta - a historical & philosophical study*, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office (Varanasi, 1963), p. 154.

4. ĀDI ŚAṅKARĀCĀRYA, *Dakṣiṇāmūrti Stotra*, Sri Ramakrishna Math (Madra, 1977), v. 2, p. 3.

great Yogi out of His own power, to that Supreme Being, embodied in the auspicious and benign Guru, I offer my profound salutation ».

And,

*cidātmaiva hi devo'ntasthitam icchāvaśād bahih,
yogīva nirupādānam arthajātaṃ prakāśaye*⁵.

« By His own will the Supreme Lord, the essence of Knowledge (Supreme Consciousness) projects causelessly like the Yogi into this multiformal world ».

Again, in *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra*, Śaṅkara says:

*viśvaṃ darpaṇa-drśyamāna-nagarī-tulyaṃ nījāntargatam
paśyannātmani māyayā bahirivodbhūtaṃ yathā nidrayā*⁶.

« Who, by *Māyā* as by dream, sees Himself the universe which is inside Him, like unto a city that appears in a mirror, (but) which is manifested as if without ». Commenting on this, T. M. P. Mahadevan⁷ points out that « in this hymn Śaṅkara employs certain key terms and concepts of the *Pratyabhiññā* system known popularly as Kashmir Śaivism. The illustration of the mirrored city, according to him, is found in the *Pratyabhiññā* works ». Thus, it becomes evident that both Śaṅkara's Vedānta philosophy and the then prevalent Śaivism profoundly influenced the people of Kashmir. The ancient Śaivism, re-introduced by Vasugupta in *Śiva-Sūtras* and elaborately explained in philosophical terms by Somānanda through his *Śiva-Dr̥ṣṭi* during the middle and later parts of the 9th century A.D. respectively, developed into a firm philosophical system — the Kashmir Śaivism. The simultaneous development of the two systems — Vedānta and Śaivism, and their consequent influence on the people of Kashmir is visible even to this day in the performance of daily and occasional rites and rituals of Kashmiri Pandits. Hymns from the Vedas and recitations from Tantras are simultaneously included in all types of their religious performances. Even *Mukundamālā* and *Sivamahimnāstotram*, the two hymns composed much later in honour of Lord Viṣṇu and Lord Śiva (the two supreme deities of the two philosophical systems) respectively, are recited and worship offered simultaneously by the people in a traditional manner.

There is hardly any difference between the two established philosophies so far as their basic aims are concerned. Both are monistic and aimed at the realization of the Ultimate Reality, which one calls *Parabrahman* and the other *Parama-Śiva*. *Parama-Śiva* or *Parameśvara* is that Ultimate Reality which Vedas declare:

*sadeva saumyedadagrāsīt ekamevādviṭīyam*⁸.

5. ABHINAVAGUPTA, *Īśvarapratyabhiññā Vimarsinī*, Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, no. XXII (Research Department, Srinagar, 1918), v. I, 1/5/7, p. 182.

6. V. I, p. 2.

7. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, *The Hymns of Śaṅkara*, Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1970, pp. 6-7.

8. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6/2/1.

« This world came out from the Eternal Existence, which is one, the only and without the second ». However, as regards their composition, there are some perceptible differences between the two systems. On the basis of Sāṃkhya, both the philosophies concede that the universe is comprised of various *tattvas* (or categories), but differ as to their exact number. There are twenty-three *tattvas* that are common to both. They are, in the order of involution, as follows⁹:

1-5 Five *bhūtas* (elements);

6-10 Five *jñānendriyas* (organs of cognition);

11-15 Five *karmendriyas* (organs of action);

16-20 Five *tanmātras* (subtle elements); and,

21-23 Three *antaḥkaraṇas* (internal organs)—mind, intellect and ego.

The points of difference are:

i) In Vedānta the twenty-fourth category (24) is *prakṛti* and the twenty-fifth (25) is the *puruṣa*, which is termed *parameśvara* (the Supreme Being). He is ever pure and is not tainted with the stain of worldly corruption, just as no amount of dirt can ever alter the chemical purity of gold in the gold ring. Therefore, soul or self in Vedānta means the universal soul, the *paramātmān* or Supreme Spirit. This is identified with *puruṣa*, the efficient cause of the manifest world. It brings about all change by its mere presence as the sun brings forth the spring flowers. In *Ātmabodha*, Śaṅkara explains the state of Brahman in graphic words thus:

(a) *Yadbhāsā brāsyete'rkādi
bhāsyairyattu na bhāsyate.
yena sarvamidam bhāti
tad brahmetyavadhārayet*¹⁰.

« Whose self-luminous light illumines the luminous orbs like the sun and the moon; Realize that to be Brahman, nothing can illumine Him but He illumines everything ».

(b) *Svayamantarbahirvyāpya
bhāsayannakhilam jagat,
brahma prakāśate vahni-
prataptāyasapiṇḍavat*¹¹.

« The Supreme Brahman pervades the entire universe outwardly and inwardly and shines of itself like the fire that permeates a red-hot

9. ĪSVARAKRṢṢṢA, *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, Motilal Banarsidass (Delhi, 1974), 3/22.

10. ĀDI ŚAṅKARĀCĀRYA, *Ātmabodha*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore (Madras, 1967), stanza 61, p. 220.

11. *Ibid.*, stanza 62, p. 221.

iron ball ». This may be compared with the exposition of Brahman in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* ¹²:

*Na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratāarakam
nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ
tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvam,
tasya bhāsā sarvavidam vibhāti.*

« The sun does not shine there, not the moon and the stars, nor there lightnings, and much less this fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him; by His light all this is lighted ».

Trika, on the other hand, adds thirteen more *tattvas* to the twenty-three of *Sāṅkhya*. These are:

24 *prakṛti* - the world of difference which has the quality of being affected;

25 *puruṣa* - the limited individual;

26-30 Five *kañcukas* or sheaths. (They are the limiting adjuncts on the individual in respect of *kalā* - space, *vidyā* - knowledge, *rāga* - interest, *kāla* - time and *niyati* - authorship).

All these *tattvas* are classified under *aśuddha tattva* - the category of « impure knowledge ».

31 *Māyā* or the individual power of Śiva. It is His power of production of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*.

The following five *tattvas* are considered as constituting « pure knowledge » ¹³:

32 *kriyā* (action aspect) - (*śuddhavidyā*);

33 *jñāna* (knowledge aspect) - (*iśvara*);

34 *icchā* (will aspect) - (*sadāśiva*);

35 *ānanda* (bliss aspect) - (*śakti*);

36 *cit* (consciousness aspect) - (*Śiva*).

In Kashmir Śaiva philosophy the basic thesis is that the process of evolution takes place from *Śiva tattva* — the Ultimate condition of consciousness in its immanent aspect, upto the *prithvī tattva* (earth), the last material element which forms the thirty-sixth (36) modification. Out of these, first five are classified under « pure knowledge » category and represent the manifestation of the universal aspect of consciousness and correspond to the five mouths (*mukhas*) of Lord Śiva, here known

12. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 2/2/11.

13. ABHINAVAGUPTA, *Tantrāloka*, Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, no. XXIX (Research Department, Srinagar, 1922), v. VI, pp. 48-51.

as *Svacchandanaṭha*. It is from Him that the *Tantras* are believed to have originated. They were revealed by Him through His five mouths, namely, *Īśāna*, *Tatpuruṣa*, *Sadyojāta*, *Vāmadeva* and *Aghora*. It may be noted here that Kashmir Śaivism postulates the single Reality, i.e., *Parama-Siva* or the Supreme Consciousness with two aspects — one, Transcendental (*viśvottīrṇa*) and the other, Immanent (*viśvamaya*). In Vedānta philosophy they are termed «causal reality» (*kāraṇa Brahman*) and «effective reality» (*kārya Brahman*) respectively. The first, however, is beyond manifestation while the second pervades the universe of manifestation. But both are real as the effect cannot be different from the cause. In *Paramārtha Sāra*, known as the «Primer of Kashmir Śaivism» we find the expression:

*Siva eva gṛhītapaśubhāvaḥ*¹⁴.

«Verily this is Śiva who has assumed this form of duality».

ii) Vedānta discusses the relationship of God (*Īśvara*), matter (*Jiva*), and world (*jagat*). The central theme of the *Vedānta-Sūtras* is the philosophical teachings of the *Upaniṣads*, which concern the nature of these three relative principles. This includes the relation between the universal soul and the individual soul. Śaṅkarācārya explained, for the practical purposes, this union in the monumental commentaries composed by him in the early 8th century A.D.

The system of Kashmir Śaivism deal with the three-fold principle of God (*Śiva*), soul (*nara*) and matter (*Śakti*), which gives it the name of *Trika* system. Vasugupta in the 9th century received the *Siva-Sūtras* by inspiration and explained these to preserve for man, the principle of monism which existed in the *Tantras*, also known as *Āgamas*. This revived an understanding of truth in its ultimate form.

iii) In Vedānta, *māyā* is a means of operation. It is not a substance but a force which creates illusion of non-perception in nature. It is the dividing force or, what we may call, the finitising energy which creates form in the formless. The world is known as *māyā* because it has no reality. It is only an appearance of fleeting forms. The real is never affected by the unreal as the ground is never made wet by a mirage. *Māyā* is ignorance (*avidyā*) when it operates the individual mind. It vanishes when the knowledge of reality dawns just as the morning mist dissipates on rising of the sun.

In Kashmir Śaivism *māyā* is the power of contraction of the five universal modes of consciousness, called the *kañcukas* or sheaths. The power of contraction works in the following manner:

External existence (*nityatā*) contracts into time (*anīyatā*) - *kāla*;

All-pervasiveness (*sarvavyāpakatā*) contracts into space (*niyatī*) - *niyatī*;

14. ABHINAVAGUPTA, *Paramārthasāra*, Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies, no. VII (Research Department, Srinagar, 1916), stanza 5, p. 12.

All-completeness (*pūrṇatā*) contracts into desire (*apūrṇatā*) - *rāga*;
All-knowledge (*sarvajñatā*) contracts into limited knowledge (*alpajñatā*) - *kalā* and

All-powerfulness (*sarvakartṛtā*) contracts into limited power (*alpakartṛtā*) - *vidyā*.

Māyā-śakti, as it is called here, produces *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* which together establish the dual world of mind and matter. Here it is termed *māyā-granthi*, as it becomes the cause of bondage. As the gross power of consciousness it is called *māyā-śakti*, which grants liberation to the contracted soul. The influence of *māyā* is evident in the law of Nature. Every period of action is followed by a period of rest just as sleep follows action.

iv) In Vedānta we are required to pass through the four-fold discipline which, according to Śaṅkarācārya¹⁵, consists of: *viveka* (discrimination); *vairāgya* (dispassion); *ṣaṭ-sampat* (right conduct - sixfold); and *mumukṣutva* (desire for liberation). There are also three kinds of students who advance towards self-realization. They are those who:

- (i) act with zeal and faith,
- (ii) act for the good of humanity, and
- (iii) are immersed in meditation.

But, in Śaivism, it is said «*na ko'py adbhikāribhedo'tra*», that is, «there is no consideration of first being worthy of it». There is no restriction of caste, creed or colour for getting admission to this Śaiva order. This naturally must mean that it is the intelligent who can grasp this advanced philosophy, being as it is unique and the latest development on all the others. For the fine intellects no restrictions are imposed. However, there are the following grades of *dikṣā* - initiation:

1. *Sāmayika* - when the disciple is given the training of proper discipline.
2. *Putraka* - when spiritual knowledge is imparted to the disciple.
3. *Ācārya* - when the disciple becomes *ācārya* (preceptor) and
4. *Siddha* - the perfect being, the Master.

v) Divine Grace is termed *anugraha* in Vedānta and *śaktipāta* in Kashmir Śaivism. Both the philosophies understand it to be unconditional. They are in complete agreement with each other on this point. Vedānta says that intellectual power, study of Vedas and even spiritual instruction are persued by divine grace alone:

*Īśvarānugrahādeva puṁsāmadvaitavāsanā*¹⁶.

15. ĀDI ŚAṅKARĀCĀRYA, *Tattvabodha*, Śrī Venkateshwara Steam Press (Bombay, 1906), pp. 6-10.

16. DATTĀTREYA, *Avadūta-Gītā*, Nirṇaya Sagar Press (Bombay, 1939), 1/1.

« It is by Lord's grace that one is led to monistic practices ». Again, the *Upaniṣads* declare:

*Yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyastasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṃ svām*¹⁷.
*svām*¹⁷.

« *Ātman* can be realized by him whom He favours and to whom He reveals Himself ». In Śaivism also, it is *śaktipāta* that is the cause of self-recognition. It is said:

gale pādikayā nātha nīyate sadgurum prati.

« One is directed towards the perception as if tethered with a rope »
nātra ko'pi ātmīyaḥ puruṣakāraḥ.

« There is no human effort to earn *śaktipāta* ». It is the independent will of Lord Śiva to grant *śaktipāta* or divine grace to any one at any place and at any time.

vi) Bādarāyana's viewpoint is the outcome of the various schools of thought of his day, as there existed Aśmarathya, Auḍulomi, Kāśa-kṛtsna and others who had held different views previously. His is the accepted classic of the Vedānta system today. It was endorsed and explained by Gauḍapāda and Śaṅkarācārya through *Māṇḍūkya-kārikās* and *Prasthānatrayī* respectively. Vidyāraṇya held the same view in his *Pañcadaśī*.

Likewise, we find that the polytheistic faith with greater inclination towards Śaivism developed into Kashmir Śaivism or *Trika* philosophy with the advent of Vasugupta and Somānandanātha. This peculiar philosophy developed in Kashmir and includes almost all the previous thoughts. It was further adored by Kallaṭa, Utpalācārya and later by Abhinavaguptapāda. *Śiva-Sūtras*, *Śiva-dṛṣṭi*, *Spanda*, *Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vimarśinī* need special mention in this context. Besides this, Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* and *Parātrīṃśikā Vṛtti* form the encyclopaedia of Kashmir Śaivism.

To sum up, if we study both these philosophies with interest and zeal, we shall find that both lay stress on the practical aspect, which is realization of the Self. Both enable all to realize the teachings during one's own lifetime. Their individual developments lead to the common goal — realization of the Supreme Reality — where there is no experience of duality and hence no sorrow. It is the state of absolute bliss. It is the stateless state. The Vedas declare:

ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti.

« Truth is one but the wise give it in many ways ».

Although Kashmir Śaivism can hardly be grasped until all the six systems of Indian philosophy are comprehended, yet no such system

17. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* 3/2/3.

in India will be complete without this. Tantras, no doubt, suffered a great criticism from the western and eastern scholars for their esoteric or symbolic character. But it was left to Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon) who first defended the outraged Tantras. According to Mahadevan¹⁸ «the decent Indian mind that had developed a deep-rooted prejudice against the Tantras became awake to their excellence after the pioneering work of this great foreigner». He made their meaning clear and thus helpful in understanding the culture of India. It is in continuance to this traditional literature that Kashmir Śaivism gives the most detailed analysis of the Ultimate Reality which Vedānta has already explained on the basis of Sāṃkhya philosophy.

18. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Foreword in «Garland of Letters» (by Sir John Woodroffe), Ganesh & Co. (Madras, 1974), p. 1.